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**TESTIMONY
Of
Edward Fitzgerald
Before the Appropriations Committee
Of The
Connecticut General Assembly**

February 22, 2012

Chairpersons Senator Toni Harp and Representative Toni Walker and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Ed Fitzgerald. I am here today to testify in support of the Alzheimer's Respite Program and for increased funding for this vital program.

My wife was diagnosed two years ago with an early onset dementia called Frontotemporal Degeneration. She was 63 years old at the time. A vibrant, hard working, socially active women, she now frequently spends her time staring into space unless I or someone else can arrange for activities to stimulate her. The challenge for me is to find things for her to do, people for her to be with and to make sure she is safe.

I am 66 years old, very active myself and not ready to retire. I have my own business as an internet technology specialist and am very involved in the community. I was a member for several years and past vice president of the local Community Emergency Response Team, president of the local computer club and organizer and co-leader of a small business networking group that has met in Fairfield County for almost 20 years.

I mention this because I have had to stop or cut back significantly my involvement with these community groups and my business. The disease my wife suffers from, also heavily impacts my life and the community we live in.

While my situation is difficult, there are others even more so. A member of my caregiver support group has a husband who was just diagnosed with early onset at age 50. He is the owner of his own business and they have three children one of whom is just entering college. The challenges they face are enormous.

The Respite Care Program offers support when it is needed the most. It provides relief from the constant pressure of care giving, allows the caregiver to participate in the outside world, maintain relationships, involvement with the community and maintain the economic viability of the family. It gives the loved one an environment that is supportive and enhances their life.

I would just like to add that the respite program is just one aspect of what I believe needs to be an overall state plan to identify and address the issues related to the growing number of people with Alzheimer's Disease and the demands it will put on the residents of the state in the future.

Thank you for listening and for the opportunity to testify this evening. Please feel free to contact me anytime with questions or additional information. I also offer myself as as someone who is willing to get involved and assist in any way that I can.

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